

MISS MARIGOLD'S
CHRISTMAS TREE.

BY NIXOLA GREELEY SMITH

OF THE EVENING
WORLD STAFF.

MISS NIXOLA GREELEY-SMITH.

FARRINGTON swung out of the club-house, suit-case in hand, and very leisurely took the direction of the Grand Central Station. He had not fully made up his mind where he was going to spend Christmas.

He knew that he should consider only the brilliant certainty of joining Mrs. Jimmie Madison's house party at Ardley, where a modern little Miss Marigold, a millionaire lass with a short pedigree, was waiting to say yes to him.

Yet why had that fendishly alluring little girl out in Jersey written him that she wanted him to use his influence to get her on the stage?

She knew he wouldn't like that. Though he had avoided seeing her for two years, she must realize the strange hold she had taken on his heart. Why, he had to have the chairs in his sitting-room reduced to one so as to quit thinking how she would look in the other. She had even taken the joy out of smoking since his after-dinner cigar would wreath itself into so many halos

above her absent face or into mocking symbols of the ring that every reason of worldly prudence suggested he bestow elsewhere. So Miss Marigold it was to be.

The suit-case gripped in his firm left hand contained what he thought would be a very pleasing Christmas offering to her—a tiny Christmas tree he had bought in a toy shop and hung with tiny toys, little fuzzy chickens and ducks, dolls, glass balls and tinsel. All because she had told him on the day she bade him join her at Mrs. Madison's that she hadn't had a real Christmas tree since she was twelve years old.

He was little more than two blocks from the Grand Central Station when he was startled by the violent impact of a human being rushing in the same direction and pausing not for apology.

Farrington caught one glimpse of her face, against which dark, damp wisps of hair were blowing.

It was at once so sad and so distracted, and withal so resolute to the accomplishment of some fell purpose that in a lightning flash of intuition it came to him that he beheld a human being on the verge of suicide.

The impression was so strong that he quickened his pace and after some seconds was again abreast of her. "Beg your pardon, but can I be of any assistance to you?" he said.

The woman whirled.

"Yes," she said quickly, desperately. "Yes." And then her voice quivered and broke. "I'm starving."

She said, scarcely above a whisper, "and I'm desperate and I must talk to some one. I've walked and walked and walked because I could not go back to my room and—and to my baby, who's lying awake waiting for Santa Claus to bring the answer to his letter."

"You poor child!" said Farrington. "You're cold and wet, and I'm sure you're hungry. Won't you come let me see?" His eye fell on the brilliantly lighted cafe of a studio building just in front of them. "Come in here," he said; "the head waiter knows me. It will be all right."

"But I can't," she protested. "What must you think of me?"

"I don't think of you at all," said Farrington. "I want to help you."

The cafe was crowded as always on Christmas Eve. People were supping

off serving tables and packing boxes. Through the welcoming head waiter Farrington secured a packing box in a remote corner and for fifteen minutes devoted himself to watching his companion.

"It does me good to see you eat," he said at last. "But how did you come to be so hungry and where were you going?"

"I don't know," said the girl slowly. "I don't know. To the river, I think. I lived out in Marietta, O. My folks were poor and I wanted to help them out. The manager of a show liked my looks and took me as a chorus girl. Six months after I left home I married. He was nobody—a chorus man as poor as myself. He drank and beat me. I left him. I don't know where he is. I don't care."

I went out with a show four weeks ago, got stranded in Utica and it took every cent I had to get back to New York. I've pawned everything I had and I just couldn't stand hearing that little kid say, 'Mamma, when is Santa Claus coming?' So I went out. I couldn't help it. I didn't know what I was going to do. And you spoke to me. That's my story. I suppose you don't believe a word of it," she ended.

She looked straight into Farrington's eyes, but for the moment he did not see her. His mind had gone back to the girl in Jersey, who also had brown eyes, and the letter from her that was in his coat pocket was like a dead weight upon his heart.

A waiter with a trayful of brilliant favors hovered over the table and dropped a gaudy black and gold butterfly at the girl's plate.

"Oh," she said, "I can go home now. I've got something to take to Jack. Santa Claus hasn't forgotten him after all."

"No," said Farrington slowly, "he hasn't. But, you know, Jack should have a Christmas tree. And by remarkable good luck I've got one—the prettiest little one you ever saw—right here in my suit-case. I bought it for some one else, but she won't need it. My name's Richard Farrington. A line will reach me at the Knickerbocker. I say that because you've got to let me lend you money enough to tide you over. Yes, you'll do it. Not for me, but for the little girl in Jersey that I'm going to now and that I hope is to be my wife."

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THE LOST
CHRISTMAS
ANGEL

BY ALICE ROME



MISS ALICE ROME.

THE man who was telling the story put his glass on the table and glanced half-apologetically at his companions.

"It's the first time I've ever asked anybody to eat Freddy's Christmas dinner, but somehow when I saw you to-night there was a look in your eyes that made me think of her, and I said to myself, 'Bill, old boy, may-be the ladies and the gentleman will humor a lonesome old bachelor and come over and eat a Christmas dinner with him.'"

"There's nothin' too good for you, and the place is yours."

The woman with the big brown eyes and yellow hair dropped her heavy lashes as the speaker looked at her. The Titan-haired beauty opposite smiled behind an Oriental perfumed handkerchief, and the other man in the party endeavored to conceal the bored look that was creeping into his world-worn eyes.

"Frederica was her real name," said the host, as he brushed a crumb from the sleeve of his evening coat, whose newness was as apparent as the acquisition of his money. "Frederica Delo, but we called her Freddy for short. You see, it was fifteen years ago. Gee, what a winter! I had staked all my hopes on makin' a haul on the Camp Lil mine when a confounded explosion comes up and nearly sends me over the Great Divide for good."

"They hustled me down to Durango as quick as they could move my carcass, and they put me in the Widow Kent's hotel, where the doctor was handy. I lay there cursin' and sayin' awful things that would make you ladies shiver. There was one thing I made up my mind to do, and that was to get rid of my bad luck that night. I was goin' to do it with a pocket-knife when the doctor had gone and the Widow Kent was sound asleep in the parlor."

"I was thinkin' a whole lot of wicked things about Merry Christ-

mas when I heard some one singin' low just outside my door. It was a pretty voice singin' something about 'Hark, the Herald Angels Sing.' I wasn't feelin' in an angelic mood, but I called out and asked who was there."

"I wish you could have seen the face that peered around the door. It was an angel's face; not the kind you see on Christmas cards with china blue eyes and golden curls."

"I ain't much on sentiment, ladies, but I never had such feelings as when that innocent child with the big brown eyes and the wavy black hair came into the room and sat on the foot of my bed to talk to me."

"You poor man," she said. "I won't be a very Merry Christmas for you, will it, all tied up here in bed?"

"When she went away that night she came up and leaned over my bed, and before I knew it she had kissed me good-night right on the mouth. 'That's what I always did to daddy before he died,' she said, with a little tremble in her voice; then she crept away real soft, and I lay there thinkin' about my Christmas angel till I fell asleep."

"The next morning I'd forgotten all about killin' myself, for when I opened my eyes there was a lot of things Christmas stuff at the foot of my bed, and there came my angel through the door draggin' a branch of fir tree all trimmed with red popcorn."

"Freddy," I said, 'do you know you're the only person in the world who's ever thought about me on Christmas since they turned me out of the Orphan Asylum in Denver. Now, little girl, I'm goin' to get well, and some day we'll eat a Christmas dinner together that will make the President of the United States month water.'"

"Well, a month after that I started out for Australia, and I didn't see the last I ever heard of Freddy—the last, except a gold dollar I found in my vest pocket where she had hid it."

"I feel, though, that somewhere there is an innocent-faced little girl expectin' to hear from me; but I've never been able to trace her."

The woman with the brown eyes and the yellow hair put her handkerchief to her lips, and her jeweled hand trembled.

"I thought at first your eyes were like Freddy's," said the man who was telling the story, "but no—they're different, and then Freddy's hair was black, and yours is as yellow as the Kingdom of God."

The woman with the brown eyes and the yellow hair drew back. Her red lips trembled, and she shivered as though she had been struck by an icy blast.

"You have given me a delightful Christmas dinner," she said, with a laugh; "but I must go now. My head aches, and if you will take me to a cab I will go home alone."

She held out her jeweled hand to the man who had told the story.

"I hope you will never lose your ideal," she said, with a tired smile on her curving red lips.

"God bless you and your lost Freddy."

and broke upon my head affording sufficient landward impetus.

"At last I was washed high and dry upon a shingly beach and saw in an instant that I was not to be lonely. A reception committee, headed by the king, a full hand of queens and a royal group of princes and princesses was hard alee on the job. So was the king's chef, who stepped forward with a sprightly gait and regarded me with the calm eye of an expert.

"What thinks cook?" I translate freely the king's tongue, for in my situation one did not need auto-suggestion to understand the quaint phrases that were so poignantly personal. "What thinks cook?" he repeated with significant emphasis. "Will this do?"

"Very nicely," responded the chef, smiling unpleasantly, "with a little kneading and parboiling it will do excellently well. It is convenient that he has come ashore orated so carefully. Thereupon my men and I fully."

It was carried upon the shoulders of six court eunuchs to the chef's proving ground, adjoining a wing of the royal hut.

"Freud from the crate I was set at liberty in a rather commodious enclosure (a sort of stockade, upon the top timbers of which sat a row of a dozen or more silk hats, distinctly clerical in cut). The chef informed me in a somewhat ironical tone that he regretted that I had come ashore bareheaded, as he took some pride in his collection. I was able to state truthfully that the merry spirit of Yuletide did not thrill me at that moment.

Nor did joy stir the cockles of my heart when two husky young princes approached and felt of my arms and legs approvingly, nodding to the chef and exclaiming: "See that you make the shirt with palm leaves, as that gives the dish a tasty look."

"My palor evidently displeased the chef, and to cheer me up he led me to his den back of the kitchen, where he had quite a collection of souvenirs of his earlier culinary triumphs. He offered for my inspection the cover of a tract entitled, 'Make Not a Gluten of Thyself,' on which was scribbled in a slightly nervous hand: 'If this ever reaches the general secretary of the Home Mission know-

ing that Ebenezer Rand perished game to the end."

"He was a trifle too game," the chef remarked, casually, "and I nearly lost my job."

"I mumbled something to be polite. I was becoming even incoherent. It did not perk me up a bit when the royal cook asked me to turn the gradstone while he put a hair-sage

on the bone-handled carver.

"It was just at that moment that the great earthquake occurred, dividing the island in two, the lower half dropping to the bottom of the sea while the ground on which the chef and I stood remained firm."

"Luckily for me, the royal family and all of the little tribe were exercising in order to give rest to their

appetites, on the beach that slipped beneath the sea. When I realized myself alone with the chef my courage returned and I overwhelmed him with his own great spoon. A passing vessel rescued me on New Year's Day."

Bilboa Peter sighed comfortably and for some moments there was a tense silence about the festive board.

THE MARRIAGE
OF SANTA CLAUS

BY RUTH EARLE

OF THE
EVENING WORLD STAFF.

MISS RUTH EARLE.

QUARREL over a Christmas gift began it—or ended it.

A week after they had arranged their destinies for the tenth time, agreeing to be "just pals."

They were having tea in the Kensington drawing-room, when Janet cried, apropos of nothing: "I wish I knew what to give you for Christmas!"

"Shall I tell you?" asked Phil, quite matter-of-factly.

"Please."

"Your sweet yourself," said he boldly. There was a pause while Janet's eyes sparkled with a rare choleric fire.

"You broke the pact!" she cried. "But you made me," pleaded Phil.

"How?"

"You asked me what I wanted for Christmas."

"Philip Jordan, you're incorrigible, and you don't fight fairly."

"That was the beginning of the disagreement. Philip insisted that as man it was his inalienable right to persist in demanding the hand of his lady love. Janet disputed his claim, saying that battles once fought weren't worth waging again."

"But we're never had anything more than a skirmish," Phil argued. "Then this shall be decisive."

"Very well," said he, "if you wish it." And he rose very quietly, looking hurt and sad as a lover should.

"Janet, I want all you have to give; but if you aren't willing, all right. I won't bother you any more. Good-by." And he kissed her hand in the reverent manner most befitting the occasion and left her.

Surprisingly from behind the curtains Janet watched him cross the street to the club.

"Phil makes a nice rejected suitor," she thought. "I wonder what time he'll be back this evening."

She sat until quite late that night reading in a big chair in the library. It was a most becoming chair. The dark leather set off her shoulders remarkably well. The lamp glow turned her hair to brighter gold beneath Phil's orchids, and her gown was one he loved. But Philip Jordan, esq., did not come to see.

The next day went without a word from him, and the next Janet laughed.

Another day and she began to play Sister Ann at the window. But strangely enough she never saw the familiar Phil either going in or out of the club.

After a week Janet grew uneasy. She called up 9505 Cortlandt.

"Mr. Jordan," said the voice on the wire. "Why, he left town a week ago on a long leave of absence."

"Oh!" said Janet very faintly. In nervous haste she rang for 8800 Plaza.

"Mr. Jordan hasn't been at the club for two weeks. Volunteered in some relief expedition. Ordered his things packed up and put away."

Janet dropped the receiver. "How could he?" she gasped. "And without a word to me!"

"And, somehow or other, Janet sobbed.

It was the week before Christmas and a pall had fallen on the house of Kingdom. No one noticed it much. Kingdom pere had too few interests outside the stock market to care whether his daughter Janet were happy or sad.

For the servants observed that their mistress had turned into a little recluse, denying herself to every one; that she spent hours in hiding behind the curtains and gazing out at the club-house over the way; that she shrank from the mere mention of Christmas. If they did see these things it was their business not to, that was all, except in the servants' quarters.

Janet knew there was no one to understand her trouble except the big Santa Claus over the way. He was an absurd looking figure in comically short costume flapping in the

wind and trousers much too short for his long legs and awkward, shabby boots.

But he had a charmingly sympathetic way of looking over at her about ninety-nine times a day. Of course she couldn't be sure that he was looking sympathetically because a string of foolish white goat-hair whiskers nearly eclipsed his face.

But Janet felt that his eyes were kind because he had read her troubles. "And may he be as sorrowful like it in his own poor heart," she would muse, and then slip out of the door and over the way to their room within generous bill for his chimney.

Or it might be that she went to hear him cry out to the people as they went by: "I want all you'll give me."

He said it so like Phil.

It was Christmas Eve. Janet was in the big holly-hung library, and looked sadly into the fire.

"And a month ago he wanted some old me for a Christmas gift."

"This was left for you, miss," said a maid, handing her a note.

"It's from Phil," she cried. "On something warm and meet—Santa Claus on the corner."

She drew on a coat and furs and hastened out of the street door.

There was Santa Claus descending his chimney and a messenger boy to a cab. As she came up he pulled off his whiskers, and Janet nearly fainted in his arms for the simple reason you have already guessed that he was no other than Phil.

"Just jump in here," he said, putting her into another waiting cab. "To the church around the corner of East Twenty-ninth street," he called to the driver, and slamming the door to, pulled off his Christmas top.

"How could you play me such a trick?" asked Janet, but beaming with delight.

"I knew I ought to leave you, but I didn't dare. So I took that way. I had to find out somehow if you cared, and you mind being my Christmas gift after all?"

"But not in these clothes," protested Janet.

"I think white for a heap prettier than a mere wedding gown, and I guess some mistletoe will do for exchange blossoms."

Some time later that evening Kingdom pere was awakened from deep slumber to read the following wires:

Married Phil to-night. Sail on the Atlantic to-morrow. Address care of Benoit Freres, Rue des Paria. Merry Christmas.

JANET.

SANTA CLAUS'S
UNDERSTUDY.

BY WALTER A. SINCLAIR.

OF THE EVENING WORLD STAFF.



WALTER A. SINCLAIR.

A FIFTEEN-MINUTE turn as Santa Claus in full comic whiskers, with neat songs and dances and a few refined funny falls to catch the vagrant laugh. You'd think that that was the makings of the merriest of merry Christmas—a one-night stand over indulged in, instead of leaving a ripe atmosphere of shocked surprise, a staccato and copious opinions of the E-Told-You-So Committee. Hark! Those Christmas bells!"

Having delivered this overture, Jim Hickey, vaudeville artist at leisure, scooped one ear with his hand in approved style, and after listening for imaginary bells, continued:

"Saturday morning. Curtain discloses Rube scene. Me ornamenting the deputy assistant chair of the Hotel Grand in Squiggville, N. J., without the slightest hope of giving my regard to the move-on squad before the gladsome yuletide had passed unless the manager made connections with another roll. The show stranded there Friday night, when the audience refused to come in because he was lonesome. The Sisters Montmorency had enough to beat it on the morning train, and that left the other

three of us and Murphy, the manager, sending up rockets for help.

"As mentioned, I was draping the upholstery, when a coy gent of some thirty summers and addicted to a sirupy voice, asked me if he might have a word with me. I told him I'd split a word with him if it suited, and in answer to his wireless looks we adjourned to the attic pigeon-hole reserved for trouperes.

"When we had surrounded ourselves with secrecy he said he didn't want any good people to see him talking with an actor. 'Cheer up,' I says, 'no one ever accused me of being one.'

"Then he put me wise. He said he was the superintendent of the local Sunday-school and the popular choice for the Santa Claus annual specialty at the tree-pruning in the Sunday-school hall that night. He had hired the suit and the snowy Belshazzars, but he needed a recount on the artistic temperament. As a platform monologist he was a total failure, with no assets. He was grieved with an ingrowing voice when he tried to hand out his fifteen-minute mirthful melange—and, say, the wheezes he had collected beneath the shedding chestnut tree were sobby!"

"He wanted me to teach him acting in one easy lesson. I wrestled with him an hour, and then from the heart I spoke it.

"'Deacon,' I says, 'you were cast to play the invisible silence in the mob scene. Never for yours! Your spiel is—to be dead honest—punk! Your voice annoys you and your hand were hung on wrong. From where I sat your turn is about as snappy and entertaining as the comic column of the Undertaker's Gazette.'

"'Now, I'll tell you what I'll do,' I says. 'I'll don those chinchillas and the riotous togs and go on in your place, give them a patter that will bring 'em up hollerin' and get away with it, and nobody but you will ever know that it wasn't you, and I'll do it for the V-spot that you offer me to wallop you into shape. You'll be the local hit. Are you adjacent?'

"'I got him. In the suit and whiskers nobody could tell the diff. I could do his voice to a brown turn. He

fell for it easy.

"That night he sent me up the alley from his house to the sky pilot-house half a block away. It was all framed for him to slide through an unlocked widow into the ante-room where they kept the banner-class banner. I jingled the sleigh bells on my belt and our dear pastor gave the cue, 'Here he comes now!'

"Was I a hit? Well, with having the way paved by Willie Jones, ariel ten, in 'The Night Before,' and Miss Hickey Brown in 'The Gambler's Wife,' the situation was ripe—for one best laugh. The real refined goods! I went on with a funny Dutch stomp, a good, strong song-and-dance, ten minutes' rapid fire only a year old, with insurance references, ending with 'Everybody Works but Pa,' with special Xmas verse. And the getaway.

"The kids and young folks were inhaling it with joy, but a draft seemed to tell me the deacons and deaconesses were buzzing.

"I slid out into the ante-room I got the shock of my life. A shemale voice spoke up in the semi-dark and said, 'Oh, George! Mr. Peters, why did you dance that awful dance and sing those songs? I could see times ahead for the deak. 'They are shocked,' she says, 'but you did splendid and I will stand by you.'"

"Noble girl, I says, squeezing her mitt in the dark.

"She squeaked back! A regular farce situation. I couldn't pass it up. 'Here's where I make the deak strong, I thinks, and brushed that bunch of facial excelsior over her complexion.

"She squeaked, and that's the tableau one second later when the deacons and deputy deaks bowed open the door and let in the light.

"One flash at her I took—and, oh! oh! Police!"

"Me, taking it through the window and cross lots to Bro' Peters. He was waiting to slide me out of the get-up and hustle back to cull the glory.

"Stand for it and look wise and you have the rep of a star," I says, taking the five and grabbing my suitcase. "They think you're a second Eddie Foy now."

"I hope you made it mild," he said.

"The refinedest ever," I says. "Never let on and you have 'em in the atmosphere."

"So saying, forty me to the depot, and boarding the only night train that hesitated there.

"That's my story, stranger,